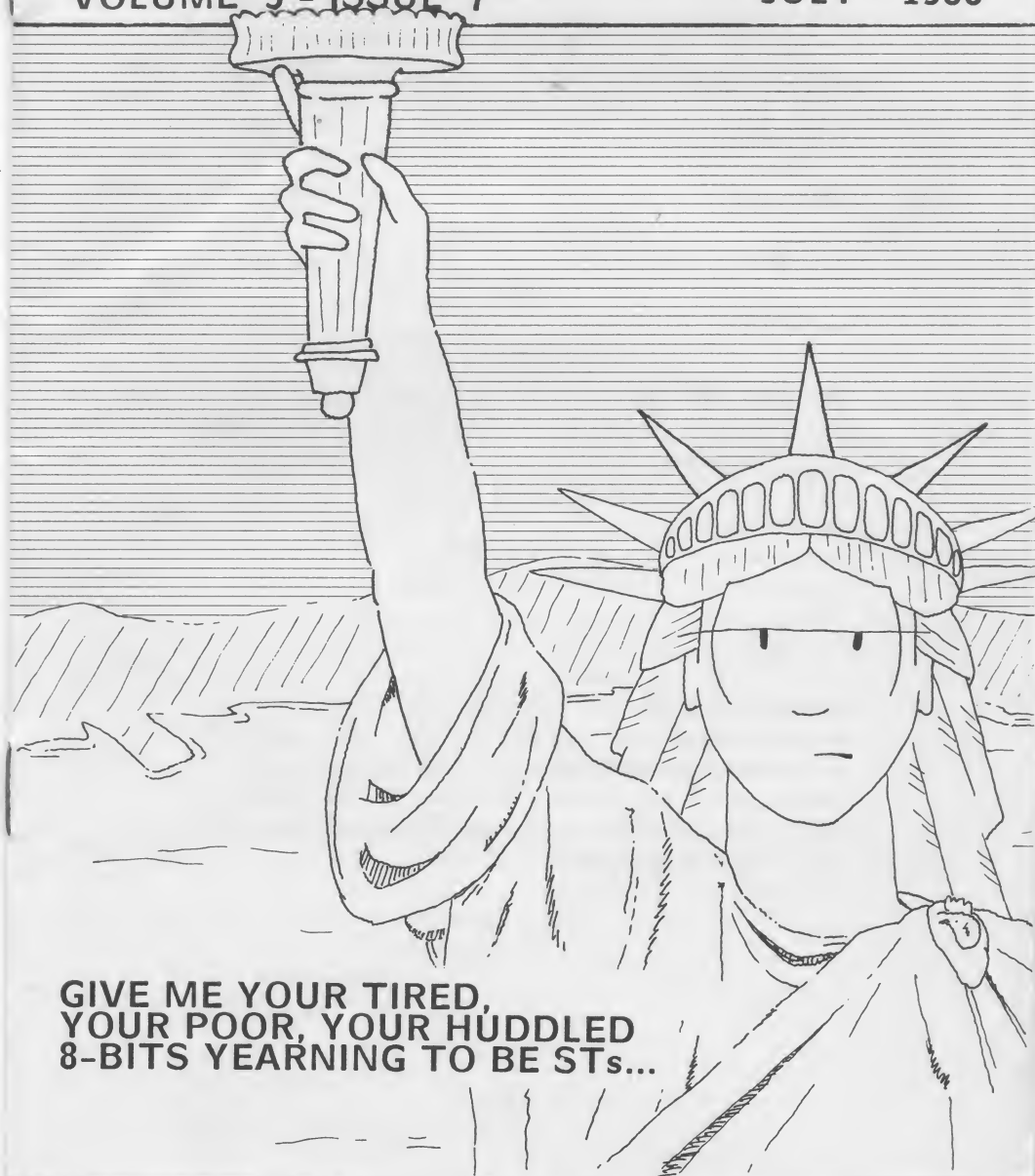


STATUS

N E W S L E T T E R

VOLUME 5 - ISSUE 7

JULY - 1986



GIVE ME YOUR TIRED,
YOUR POOR, YOUR HUDDLED
8-BITS YEARNING TO BE STs...

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Editor's File

First off, I'd like to discuss the evolution of my feelings towards the sharing of information (read *articles*) through the Newsletter Exchange. This might seem like a strange topic at first, but I think it reflects the state of our national (if not global) interest in the little hunks of metal and plastic that occupy such prominent real estate on our desks...

When I first started as Editor of this Newsletter (two years ago next month thank you) I viewed the process of "borrowing" articles from other newsletters with some naivete. While looking through other newsletters, I thought to myself that our club would certainly have enough contributors so that we wouldn't have to resort to anything like that.

That was the first month.

Since then I've come to think of the "exchange" as a necessary evil, a well one went to drink at only when one was extremely thirsty. With that view in mind, I've used the articles

from other sources as seldom as possible, but lately that's become harder to do... Which brings us to my current mind-set: the best of all possible worlds would be to publish all original material, but (like Utopia) that situation happens less and less often. So (my thinking goes) lets make the most of it by finding the best material from other clubs in the hopes that *our* members will gain some insight they wouldn't normally get locally...

Well, it looks good on paper anyway.

All of this brings up another point; often I'm given articles people have found that they think I can use (instead of writing them, I guess) and while that's fine, it would also help if I some sort of source that I could add to help give credit where credit is due. So next time you pick some thing up, try to nail down exactly where it came from...

Thanks to all our contributors for this month, wherever they come from...

THE COMMODORE 1350 CONTROLLER FOR YOUR ATARI!

(Or The Mouse That Jack Built)

By Jay Pierstorff

There has been much talk of mice and mouse controllers lately. The new Atari ST's come equipped with their own mouse... (mice? Meeces?) Anyway, those of us who have an Atari of the 8-bit persuasion have watched with great envy, wishing we too, could have mice. Even if we could buy an ST mouse for our 8-bitters (which we can't) it wouldn't work with our existing joystick (sic) programs.

Sure, we'd all love to have an Atari ST, but my 130XE's library is bigger than the ST's and more important, it's paid for. Atari is rumored to be introducing an 8-bit mouse, but it is not confirmed at the time this article is being written.

Mouse envy persists. I found myself wandering the aisles of the computer stores. Suddenly, I noticed a Commodore product beaming through the glass. "The Commodore 1350 Mouse for the

C128" was printed on the package. The price was less than \$50. Those lucky 128 owners! Too bad Atari hasn't made one for *their* computers.

The C128 Commodore is an upwardly compatible to the C64 computer. That means that any software that worked on the 64 will also run on the 128. The C64 and the Atari's have always been real friendly about using the same joystick varieties. Would this... could this... might this mouse work with a trackball or mouse driver program? The plug looked very much like a standard joystick connector. I bought it and took it home.

I could tell my Atari 130XE was nervous about the whole works, but undaunted, I loaded a trackball program, plugged in the mouse...but wait, the plug would not stay in! Upon close examination of the connector, I discovered that it was about 1/8 of an inch too short to reach the connector pins, (Commodore computers don't recess their joystick ports quite as much as Atari). I was puzzled for a moment and then I thought about using a joystick extension cable! Ha! I quickly found my extension cable and plugged one end

into port 1 and the other end plugged perfectly to the mouse!

With trembling fingers I slid the mouse across the desk, and then... nothing. The cursor was on the screen but the mouse yawned. It would not control the cursor, not even a little. Now what... I tried to think, maybe it would work with a Koala or Touch Tablet program! I booted and failed.

Maybe it was a "joystick emulator!" A Joystick in mouse clothing! I loaded the graphics editor of The PrintShop, IT WORKED! IT WAS A JOYSTICK EMULATOR ALL ALONG! Suddenly, it occurred to me I should probably calm down. I got down off the computer table and tried a few more programs. Everything that would normally run with a joystick, was working with this imitation mouse.

A comparison of the mouse and the Atari port shows the connections are mostly compatible with Atari and Commodore joysticks. Interesting that the brief, mouse instructions made no mention of Joystick emulation or even compatibility with the C64! Strange thing to keep a secret! Especially for

companies in business to make money (right Jack?).

The only non-workable feature of the 1350 Mouse is the right button. The left button is the standard "fire" button on a Joystick. The right button is connected to pin 9. The Atari looks to pin 9 for a potentiometer reading like a paddle controller would produce. But since there is no paddle emulation in the mouse, the right button is invisible to the Atari's OS. Oh well, one doesn't miss what one has never had. If Joysticks were meant to have two buttons - well, you know what I mean.

The Commodore Mouse is very usable. Even though your computer thinks it's a joystick, you will think it's a mouse! It really does an amazing job of convincing you! It feels good in your hand and moves smoothly across any flat surface. A clean desk or a "mouse pad" will give best results.

A mouse pad is a rubber backed thin cushion that gives more control over mouse movements. For mouse maintenance, the rubber-coated, steel ball can be easily removed for cleaning.

The 1350 Mouse is different from a true optical driven mouse. A true mouse has proportional control. The faster you move the mouse, the faster the cursor will move. The 1350 mimics this action but it can't move the cursor any faster than a joystick would. Slower cursor movements are imitated by the mouse delivering short, stop and go pulses to the computer.

A true mouse will always take the same desk top travel to move the cursor from one screen edge to the other. The 1350 will move the cursor at maximum speed as long as the 1350 is in any motion at any speed. That means a fast, long push may not move the cursor as far as a short, slow push! That's not really a problem though, it's just a difference that can be worked with. It can even be an advantage for limited desk top space.

The Commodore 1350 Mouse worked with all games and programs that require a joystick. Some are improved by the mouse and some are more suited to joystick control. The type of programs that are best suited to the mouse are those that require precision movements of cursor

or gunsight centering on the screen. The least suited are the programs requiring continuous scrolling movements. They often require picking the mouse up and starting again if you run out of counter space.

Drawing and doodling programs worked fabulous, Koronis Rift scores improved markedly, Rescue on Fractalus was confusing! Donkey Kong was ...different! It just depends on the type of movement involved. Many games took on a whole new feel when played with the mouse. Many were even more fun with a mouse than with a joystick!

Do you really need a mouse? Yes you do! If you own and use a joystick, you will definitely enjoy owning a 1350 mouse. I wouldn't part with mine. Don't throw your joystick away yet, but mine is seeing less use since I let the mouse in the house! The Commodore mouse is not just for the C128 anymore! It's one of the best darn joysticks since the old Atari licorice stick!



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dBMAN ver. 2.00L

VERSASOFT CORP.
723 SEAWOOD WAY
SAN JOSE, CA 95120
Reviewed by
Wilford Niepraschk

Anyone familiar with DBASE III from Aston Tate would feel right at home with dBMAN. I found it to be about 95% compatible. I have successfully converted some programs from DBASE III to dBMAN. It was not an easy task and it took a few hours. dBMAN's great debugging capabilities came in real handy. dBMAN does not come with an editor and you are told to use your favorite word processor to perform that task. I chose 1st Word from Atari. While this was adequate, I believe that this product would be much easier to use if a good editor was supplied as part of the package.

There are many enhancements to dBMAN not found in DBASE III such as descending indexing, up to ten files open at the same time with parent-child relationship, EXIT out of loop, horizontal and vertical menu selections, conversion of numbers to the equivalent words for checks, and Soundex codes.

Error handling is excellent with great debugging tools. On-Line help is also available at any time. The manual is good and command syntax is easily found. A tutorial is supplied on a separate diskette (a mail-list program).

At first I was unable to add VA as a legal State Name and after looking at the program I found that Virginia was omitted. The author must not know that we Virginians exist. This was almost enough for me not to buy this package, but I'm glad I bought it anyway. I have not found any bugs so far but I'm sure some will show up eventually.

I do recommend that you have either a hard disk, two drives or one meg of memory. The 1040ST with it's double sided drives and one Meg would be a much better choice. If you have the 520ST and only one single sided drive then don't buy this package. I have modified my 520ST to one meg and was able to set up a 500K ram drive. That seemed to work OK, but I'm saving my money for a hard disk. This is a fine product and considering the price, I think it turns out to be a real bargain.

ATARI Scuttlebits

By Bob Kelly

Excerpts from Current Notes,
June 1986

Atari news and rumors (uncensored):

-- Letter Perfect: LJK has announced they will be producing a 128K version of their excellent word processing program. They also stated under development is a word processing program for the ST. Introduction maybe in the fall. Maybe? Sometimes it is hard to give free publicity.

-- Happy: Whatever happened to version 7.0? This is the great mystery of the Atari 8-bit world. Happy is still advertising but they are not responding to user inquiries on this matter. Could it be an un-happy end is near?

-- SWP: The creators of the venerable ATR 8000 (Atari CP/M) will not make an MS Dos/PC Dos add-on box for the Atari ST. This is certainly a disappointment since all their products have an excellent reputation. However, I have it from very high authority SWP may introduce a product for the ST which will be a real stunner. Simply put, if this

product materializes, every ST owner will buy one. I have already ordered mine but it's market introduction will be no small feat.

-- The Atari Explorer: Have you wondered where your magazine is? David Ahl, formerly of Creative Computing, is now the editor and an issue will be out on or about July 1.

-- BBS: The Atari Corporation bulletin board is receiving about 2000 calls per month. It has a wide range of programs available for downloading. The phone number is 408-745-5308. Incidentally, the ARMUDIC-ST BBS is operating locally [Northern Virginia, ED.] under the FoReM system on 703-569-3227.

-- Atari Advertising: Have you noticed the increase in Atari advertising? For example, JS&A Products has been advertising the 520ST in the United Airlines Magazine for several months. Of particular note in the United advertising supplement for May, JS&A is featuring a full-page spread on the 130XE! Who would have guessed?

STATUS Minutes

Business Meeting May 5, 1986

The meeting was called to order by President Gene Rodriguez at 7:15 PM.

The minutes of the 05/03/86 Executive Committee Meeting were read.

President Rodriguez urged all members to prepare for the group's meetings to begin at 7PM sharp in the future.

President Rodriguez explained how the group would have to find a new meeting room by June, as the school had withdrawn its space since Dave Howell wished to become less active in the group and would not be attending every meeting. Bill Wright is working on finding a new meeting place.

President Rodriguez outlined his discussion with the new ATARI Users Group Representative, Sandy Austin, who previewed some of the upcoming software from ATARI, including an XL/XE 80-column adapter.

The group's new treasurer, David Levy, was introduced. President Rodriguez explained that the audit of the club's

books was not yet complete. Outgoing Treasurer J. C. Petty reported that the group did not have as much money in the treasury as was thought. Treasurer Levy reported that the audit would continue with the help of Ken Baum; and he hoped to have it completed by the June business meeting (06/02).

President Rodriguez urged all members to touch base with Membership Chairman Bill Wright to make sure they were listed on the membership list and outlined the upcoming issue of new membership cards.

Activities Director Buck Maddrey conducted a drawing for door prizes, including several packs of disks donated to the group by INTERFACE, to thank us for our donation of a Bulletin Board to their store.

No old or new business was discussed.

Following adjournment of the business meeting at 7:51 PM, Jerome Rubin of I/O Computer demonstrated the new ATARI 1040ST computer.

General Meeting May 19, 1986

The meeting was called to order by President Gene Rodriguez at 7:09 PM.

President Rodriguez announced that STATUS will hold two meetings in June at the Baylake Pines Private School.

The latest information on new hardware and software from Atari and other vendors was presented.

Nip Harrison, Bill Lynn, Bobby Prince, and Matt Huffman were the winners of the May software door prizes.

Activities Chairman Buck Maddrey conducted a member interest survey.

Following adjournment of the meeting at 7:48 PM, the new style membership cards were issued to members present.

Avatex1200Smartmodem

Reviewed by Bill Bernstein

E+E DataComm
2115 Ringwood Avenue
San Jose, CA 95131
(408) 288-8880

The Avatex 1200 Smartmodem is a state-of-the-art

modem that was originally designed to be used for business-industrial applications. Only recently did its manufacturer make it available to the home computer owner. It is compatible with the ever popular Hayes line of modems and uses the same command set and structure. If you have been spoiled with a Hayes, you will be at home with the Avatex 1200. It is 99% compatible (it does NOT run the Hayes Smartcomm software, but you may purchase the Avatex 1200HC which does).

The Avatex uses a technology that, according to E+E, is far more up-to-date than that created by Hayes in the 70s (and still used today). I agree that the Avatex is very up-to-date from my experience with it over the last six months (received it in Nov 1985). Downloading transmissions proceed without a hitch even on the most noisy phone lines. Uploads are the same... error free. And when you use an error-checking scheme like Xmodem, even more so. The modems features include:

- Full Bell 212A compatibility
- Auto answer, auto-dial, redial

- Auto adjust to incoming speeds
- 0 to 300 & 1200BPS operation
- Complete diagnostics with eight light-emitting diodes
- High reliability

As with most third-party modems, you must supply your own cable and RS232C device (i.e. 850 interface or P:R Connection for Ataris). Unlike most smartmodems, the Avatex has manual control of a couple of functions on the modem. There are some advantages and disadvantages of this, though. There are three push in/out buttons on the front panel. On/off, 300/1200, and Data/Voice. On/off is obvious. The Data/voice is a plus... it allows manual forced hang-up and manual forced originate if needed while most smartmodems can ONLY be taken off-line by the software (hang-up is software controlled, of course). Now the 300/1200 baud switch is a slight disadvantage. You must have this switch on the desired baud rate when ORIGINATING a call. This makes it hard, for example, to leave the computer/modem alone when auto-dialing a bunch of boards with mixed 300/1200 baud rates (i.e. for Atari users who use 850-Express software won't be

able to simply mark several boards and "fish" for an answer from one, unless he/she wants to just call them at 300 only or 1200 only).

Otherwise, the Avatex 1200 is fully capable of answering a call and automatically setting incoming speed, parity, word length, etc. The Avatex 1200 also sports eight, two position DIP switches hidden on the rear of the unit. These are very special. They control the following options:

- Word length (bits/char)
- Remote Digital Loopback
- Local Digital Loopback
- Self test
- Analog Loopback
- Data Terminal Ready(active/forced)
- Carrier Detect (act/forced)
- Clear to Send (act/forced)

The Avatex 1200 does not support one aspect of RS232C-RTS (request to send). It does not seem to hurt anything since RTS is not a necessary function anyway. I called E+E after not seeing an RTS pin out listed in the manual. The technician said it was an unnecessary pin-out therefore omitted.

The Avatex 1200 has a

very attractive casing. Unlike the familiar silver casing that many modems sport, the Avatex has an aesthetically pleasing beige to white casing with a dark grey front panel and bright red neon LED's as well as two white buttons and a blue one for power on/off. It complements the Atari 800XL, the Apple (beige), Commodores and even the IBM's. Unfortunately the Avatex is a very elusive machine. It hasn't been on the home computer market for very long, but it is a proven industrial/business product. The best thing to do is to visit a friend or local business who has one, or take a chance and order it.

I, myself took a chance, and ordered it through E+E's East coast distributor, Trimarc Systems. The technician there knew her (heh heh) stuff! I was amazed at her knowledge of communications and the Avatex. Convinced, I ordered it with my VISA and it came within a week. Another possible distributor is Versatile Video in Atlanta, Ga. Though not mail-order, they can ship. They also know their stuff (Atari wise).

Price: Hmmm...an interesting question. I paid \$199

in Nov 1985. That is relatively cheap considering the \$350-700 price tag on comparable back then. Now (May 1986) I've seen the doggone Avatex modem for as low as \$89 (1200 baud!!). That is super cheap compared to the STILL \$340-500 price on comparables. Money is no object when it comes to my computer system, but I simply can't pass up a steal like that!

I hope this helps! Please consider the Avatex 1200 Smartmodem, but please do not ignore the Hayes 1200, US Robotics 1200, Prometheus, Team, ADC, etc. They, too, are super modems. I personally would have bought the Hayes if I hadn't come across the Avatex. Good Luck!

TRIMARC SYSTEMS
11716 PARKLAWN DR.
ROCKVILLE, MD
(301) 231-4991

VERSATILE VIDEO
DUNWOODY, GA
(404) 393-8838

You get one free 1200 baud prime time credit hour (\$15 value) on CompuServe Information Service and free time on Dow Jones service with the purchase of an Avatex 1200.

President's Column

Our New Home....

Beginning with the July 7th meeting our group's new meeting place will be the 7UP Distribution Center, 5700 Ward Ave. Virginia Beach, Virginia... With special THANKS to Stan Harrison, for asking his boss if we could use the Distribution Center's Training Room for our meetings. The Center is located on Ward Ave and Diamond Spring Road just off Northampton Blvd., and across from the Virginia Agricultural Extension facility. That sort of narrows it down to the right coordinates! And don't ask which move this is, I've lost count. At any rate, we seem to improve with each move...And now for a brief description of the place; The room will hold about 100 people in comfort, it's air conditioned, the facility is a Training room, and has all the equipment you would expect. It has two 25" Color monitors, a large reverse view screen, an outstanding PA system, what more can I say? Come and see for yourself....

And now for the introductions...

I would like to welcome two members who have volunteered to assume positions within our organization: **Chuck Sargent** who will be our new Librarian, and **Joe Hootman** who will be making our group purchases, once these two gent's get settled down in their new jobs, I'm sure they will do their best to enhance these two positions, and to Dave Howell a very special thanks both for a job well done, as our Librarian, and for providing the school facilities for our meetings... Thank you, Dave.

Our BBS reached another milestone with 25,000 calls since going into operation. While we on the subject... **Kent Irwin's Interface BBS** becomes the first ST BBS in the Southside Tidewater area. His number is 804-857-4916, check it out...That's it for me...Oh!...What do an **IBM** clone, an **HP Laser Printer** and our newsletter have in common??? (at least we didn't resort to Commodore) They are working together to bring us an outstanding editorial product... *our Newsletter...* And lets not forget **Jim Blain**, who does our printing, and lastly, our Editor who has been at the helm for the last couple of years...Thank You ALL.

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Meetings: STATUS meetings are held on the first and third Thursdays of the month at the 7-UP Bottling Company, 5700 Ward Avenue, in Virginia Beach at 7:30 p.m. All interested parties are welcome to attend.

Newsletter Articles:

Submitted articles are preferred as disk text files, but will be gratefully accepted as hard copy (including handwriting) if you do not have a disk drive. If you have a modem, you can upload your articles to the Editor by calling the STATUS BBS at 468-1096. Articles may be submitted at any time, but will probably not make that month's Newsletter if submitted less than one week prior to the first meeting of the month.

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